News release

Improved rainfall radar coverage for southern England

25 March 2004

As part of Met Office and Environment Agency plans to site a weather radar near Dean Hill on the Hampshire-Wiltshire border, the Secretary of State for Defence has submitted a 'Notice of Proposed Development' to Salisbury District Council. The registration of this action formally starts the 8-week consultation period with interested parties.

The proposed scheme will relocate a radar owned by the Royal Navy, and currently located at Wardon Hill in Dorset, to Dean Hill. It will complement a new advanced-technology radar for which planning permission has been obtained near Maidstone in Kent. The whole of the UK is currently covered by a network of only 12 weather radars, and it has been established that this reconfiguration of the network in southern England will provide the most cost-effective improvement in coverage for the areas most at risk of flooding.

Each weather radar in the network can measure the intensity of rainfall at every location over a wide area. The weather radar network provides detailed information used in Met Office weather forecasts, and in the flood forecasting systems of the Environment Agency. The severe floods in the south and south-east of England, particularly during Autumn 2000 and Winter of 2000/1 and Winter 2003, have highlighted the need for more accurate and timely rainfall measurements in these regions to improve the quality of the forecasts. This in turn should improve the accuracy of flood warnings disseminated to the public and enable them to take more effective action to protect themselves and their property.

The Met Office, Environment Agency and Royal Navy are the partners in the project. The work so far has included comprehensive environmental assessment work and consultation with local residents, planners and other interested parties.

Martin Ward, Met Office Radar Development Manager said: "Data from radar is a vital component of a successful forecast and is crucial when it comes to issuing warnings of heavy rainfall events. Extending and developing the weather radar network, using leading-edge technology, means we can continue to improve our services to the community as a whole."

Russell Turner, Regional Flood Warning Officer for Environment Agency Southern Region, said: "The new radar installations will lead to real benefits for those living in southern areas vulnerable to flooding by increasing the lead time for warnings issued."

More about the Met Office

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